18

The Divine Goodneſs a Pattern to All.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

At the Aſſizes held at *Cheſter*, Sept. 16. 1689.

By *HENRY NEWCOME*, M. A. Rector of *Tatten-hall*, in the County Palatine of *Cheſter*.

IMPRIMATUR,

Octob. 22. 1689.

Z. Iſham. R. P. D. Henrico Epiſc. Lond. a Sacris.

LONDON;

Printed by *J. D.* for *Jonathan Robinſon* at the Golden Lion in St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1689.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

NICOLAS,

Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

My LORD;

BEing commanded by my Lords the Judges, the High-Sheriff, and the most Honourable of the Auditory, to which this Sermon was preached, to publish it; I was induced in deference to their better Judgments to hope, that what such approved of from the Pulpit, might do some good from the Press. The Design was sincere, according to my mean Capacity, to recommend to those that heard me their Duties, suitable to the occasion, and to discourage that Immorality, which hath in this last Age been the Disgrace of our Gentry, and the Bane of this Nation. I presume to prefix your Lordship's Name to it, not only because I am assured you will readily lend me the Authority thereof, for promoting so good a Design,

but also that I may lay hold on this first opportunity, to make a publick Acknowledgment of your extraordinary Favour and Bounty in preferring me to that Station, which I now enjoy in the Church. That this plain Discourse may be some way serviceable for the promoting of Justice, Charity and Sobriety, for which end it was first preached, and is now published; That your Lordship may long live among us, to second that great Example recommended in it, by your own, and that God will at length reward in Heaven your Kindness and Bounty to me here, is the hearty Prayer of,

Your Lordship's most obliged

and obedient Servant,

HENRY NEWCOME.

1 Pet. iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

It's every Man's Enquiry, *Who will ſhew us any Good?* But that will be in vain till they have found where to be ſafe from Harm. Nature, which teaches us to love our ſelves, obliges us to endeavour our own Preſervation, as neceſſary to our Happineſs. For Safety is the firſt part of Felicity, and that is beſt conſulted by Religion. The *Altar* of God is a ſure *place of Refuge*; and the *Armour of Righteouſneſs* the beſt Defence. For, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

Pſal. 4. 6.

2 Cor. 6. 7.

Which words contain two Parts; a Duty, and a Priviledg annexed to the Performance of it. The Duty is, to *be followers of that which is good.* The Priviledg, or Advantage of ſuch, *Who is he that will harm you? i. e.* None will, none can harm ſuch an one.

I ſhall firſt explain the Duty; and then conſider the Priviledg annexed as a Motive to it.

I. Firſt for the Duty. To *follow*, hath relation either to an End or a Patern, and ſtill denotes either to purſue a Deſign, or tranſcribe an Example. Here the Greek word μιμηταὶ, which ſignifies *Imitators*, evidently confines it to the latter Notion. The only difficulty to be explained is, what is to be underſtood by *that which is good*, which is here propoſed as the Patern or Example, which we are to follow, or imitate. Now τὸ ἀγαθὸν, *The Good*, not only in the Writings of *Plato*, *Triſmegiſtus*, and other Heathen Philoſophers, but alſo in Sacred Writ too, is uſed to ſignify God Himſelf: As when our Saviour ſaith, *There is* Mat. 19. 17. *none good but one, that is God*; he ſeems to appropriate to God this Title of *The Good*. And if we conſider the Verſe before my Text, we find that it is the *Lord*, *whoſe Eyes are over the Righteous*, and *whoſe Face is againſt them that do Evil*, whom the Apoſtle recommends under the Notion of *the Good*, to our Imitation. *Be ye followers of the Good*, is the Duty in the Text, which is the ſame with what St. *Paul* recom-

recommends to the *Epheſians*, to *be followers of God as dear Children.* Only by ſtyling God *the Good* here, St. *Peter* ſeems to reſtrain that general Precept of imitating God to that Divine Perfection, which is the moſt proper Object of our Imitation, *his Goodneſs.* *Plutarch* derides the Ambition of ſome Princes, that affecting the Power of the Deity, would be painted with Thunder, or a Trident; ſhewing their Folly (ſaith he) in deſiring to be like God in what they could not attain, whilſt they deſpiſed what is moſt Divine in the Deity, and what he is moſt willing they ſhould ſhare with him in, his Juſtice, Meekneſs, Lenity and Bounty; that is, in the Apoſtle's Language, his *Goodneſs.* *Adam* aſpiring to be like God in Knowledg, and *Lucifer* in Majeſty, that was caſt out of Paradiſe, and this out of Heaven: But for Angels or Men to covet to be like God in Goodneſs, never will be a Tranſgreſſion; Nay, it is our Duty, it is the chief End of our pure Religion, and will be our Perfection to imitate God in this, which is *his Glory*, the very beſt and moſt imitable of his Perfections.

Cap. 5. 1.

πρὸς ἡγεμόνα ἀπολίδευτον. Mor. *p.* 780.

Exod. 33. 18, 19.

To be Followers of this, whether in a public or private Capacity; whether in the Offices

of Magiſtracy, or common Neighbourhood, would conſtitute a good Chriſtian.

Firſt; *Magiſtrates cannot have a better Example, than his Goodneſs, who governs the World, to tranſcribe in the Exerciſe of their Authority.* And that both in reſpect of his watchful Providence, and his untainted Juſtice.

1. For the firſt. It was a groſs and low Conceit, which *Epicurus* framed to himſelf of the Divine Nature, when he apprehended the Care of his Creatures too cumberſom an Employment for him, or that it was inconſiſtent with his Happineſs to provide for theirs. Since the beſt Natures are moſt communicative, and equally happy in diſpenſing, as enjoying, their own Goodneſs. And to ſuppoſe God otherwiſe, were to deny him to be the beſt of Beings, that is, to be God. What therefore was the Commendation of the *Roman* General, that he took care not only to provide Pay for his Captains, but even Litter too for the meaneſt Beaſt that ſerved his Camp, is much more true of the *Lord of Hoſts*, whoſe Care and Bounty is exerted towards the meaneſt as well as the nobleſt of his Creatures.

And when the Scripture ſtiles Magiſtrates Pſal. 82. 6. *Gods*, it intends they ſhould imitate God's Provi-

Providence, as well as ſhare in his Authority; and be as ready to undergo the Toil, as enjoy the Honour of governing *Antigonus* ſtiled the Royal State a *great Slavery*; and nothing can reconcile a good Magiſtrate to the Drudgery of his Office, but the Conſcience of the great Good he doth thereby to others. Every Crown and Enſign of Authority hath its Thorns, which he bears (as the Saviour of the World did his) for the good of Mankind, which in a lower Capacity he deſigns and endeavours to promote thereby. But as in his Care, ſo alſo,

2. *In the diſtribution of Juſtice*, a good Magiſtrate makes the Divine Goodneſs his Example. It was for this, ſaith *Plutarch*, that the Heathens repreſented Juſtice to be always with *Jupiter*; not as *Anaxarchus* gloſſed, to flatter *Alexander* after the Murder of his Friend *Clitus*, as if whatever a King did, were to be accounted juſt, but becauſe *Jove* himſelf cannot rule the World longer than Juſtice is his Aſſeſſor. Moral. p. 781.

1. Conſider then, that God ſits not in Heaven an unconcerned Spectator, but a *compaſſionate Helper of the Oppreſſed*; He hath his Ears always open to their Cries, and hears nothing ſo ſoon as the Groans of Injured Innocence.

When

Exod. 22. v3. *with* 2er. 27. When ſuch cry, he ſaith, he will *ſurely hear them*, and for this reaſon, *becauſe he is gracious.*

This Goodneſs are the Earthly Gods to tranſcribe, as remembring that they were ordained (to uſe the words of judicious Biſhop *Sanderſon*) not ſo much for their own ſakes, that they might have over whom to bear rule and to domineer at pleaſure; as for the Peoples ſakes, that the People might have to whom to reſort, and upon whom to depend for Help and Succor, and Relief in their Neceſſities: And that it is not a Power to hurt, but a Power to help, that makes them like the Deity. From whom they may learn not only Compaſſion toward the Innocent, but alſo

Serm. 1ſt ad Magiſ. p. 86. §. 10.

2. *Patience towards the Guilty.* It was not the leaſt witty of *Momus*'s Cenſure, when he found fault, that the Salvage Bull had his Eyes under, rather than above his Horns. Sure I am, all Power ought to be governed by Reaſon; and that is ſo, which takes its meaſures from God. He *went down to ſee* whether the Sin of *Sodom* were as heinous, as the Cry of it was loud: Not that he needed Information, but that Magiſtrates by his Example might be induced with Diligence and Patience to hear, examine, and enquire into the Truth of things, whether

Gen. 18. 21.

whether judicial or criminal, before they paſs Sentence. And,

3. Laſtly, that they ſwerve not from their Rule, they muſt not *be influenced by the fear or favour of Men*, to part with Juſtice, Conſcience, or true Honour. They muſt not let Gold turn the Scales in Judgment, nor preponderate the Reaſon and Merits of the Cauſe: But ſo impartially and with that noble Reſolution perfrom their Duty, as to diſcourage all Attempts to pervert them. They muſt not fear Vice, when moſt bold or beſt befriended, but dare to puniſh the greateſt as well as the meaneſt Crimial that is brought before them: For this is to be like God, who hath oft declared, *that he is no Reſpecter of Perſons*, but will *judg all Men according to their Works*. Greatneſs cannot awe him, nor can Miſery melt him: The rich Man's Purſe, the poor Man's Tears cannot bribe him. Omnipotence cannot be frighted, nor Allſufficiency corrupted. God loveth none ſo as to injure any other for their ſakes; nor doth he hate any ſo, as to ſacrifice his Juſtice to Revenge. *Clouds and Darkneſs are round about him*; i e. there may ſometimes be obſcurity in the Divine Diſpenſations, through which Men may not ſo clearly diſcern the Pſal. 97. 2.

Equity

Equity of his Proceedings; yet *Righteouſneſs and Judgment are* always *the Habitation of his*
Prov. 25. 5. *Throne.* As the *King's Throne* on Earth, ſo God's in Heaven, *is eſtabliſhed in Righteouſneſs.*

And in this Mirror of the Divine Goodneſs Magiſtrates may diſcern their Duties; good ones may ſee themſelves in it, what they are, and others what they ſhould be. But leſt the Mirror ſhould have contracted any flaw by my rougher handling of it, I ſhall conclude with the words of King *Jehoſhaphat* to his Judges, wherein you have the Parallel more exactly drawn. *Take heed what ye do; for ye*
2 Chron. 19. 6, 7. *judg not for Man, but for the Lord, who is with you in Judgment. Wherefore now let the Fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it: for there is no Iniquity with the Lord our God, nor reſpect of Perſons, nor taking of Gifts.* I proceed,

Secondly, To recommend this Example of the Divine Goodneſs to others in a more private Capacity, as an excellent Rule of their Duties, eſpecially in theſe four branches of it, *viz.* Juſtice, Bounty, Mercy, and Purity.

1. *Juſtice.* God in all his Diſpenſations and Actings is ſo juſt, that no Man was ever wronged by him. He appeals in this reſpect
Ezek. 18. 25 to all the World by the Prophet; *Are not my ways*

ways equal? For they muſt needs be ſo, ſince there is not in him any of that Ignorance, or thoſe blind Affections (ſuch as Fear, Rage, Covetouſneſs, or the like) which commonly lead Men into unjuſt Deſigns. *Be ye then righteous*, as *God is Righteous.* Let not Great- 1 Joh. 3. 7.
neſs pleaſe it ſelf in bearing down the Rights of Inferiours, there is no Example of any ſuch thing in God. Let not rich Men attempt to corrupt Juſtice by Bribery, or undermine it by hired Perjuries: Let no Advocate be found (to uſe the words of a late Reverend Writer) of ſo degenerous a Mind, or ſo mercinary a Tongue, as to plead any Cauſe to obtain the Ends of Avarice or Ambition; as if, with the Italian Lawyer, he thought himſelf only the Advocate of his Client, and not of Juſtice. Let no Witneſſes, to gratify a Friend, to curry Favour with a Superiour, or to be revenged of an Enemy, enlarge their Evidence beyond the meaſures of Truth. Let not Jurors, through heedleſneſs or prejudice, give away any righteous Cauſe by an unrighteous Verdict. In a word, let every one now to be concerned in the Adminiſtration of Juſtice, remember what the Apoſtle affirms, That *God is righteous*, and he only *who doth Righteouſneſs is born of him.* 1 Joh. 2. 29.

Nothing, ſaith *Plato*, is more like God than a juſt Man, and ſuch an one only is entitled to the Priviledges of his Children. Unjuſt Men rather follow the Wickedneſs of the infernal Fiends, who do what Miſchief and Wrong they can to the whole Creation, than the Goodneſs of God, who doth Right to all Men, even to the Devil, and bad Men themſelves. But as the Juſtice, ſo

2. *The Bounty of God*, is another branch of his Goodneſs to be tranſcribed by us. When God declares himſelf *abundant in Goodneſs*, he expreſſes it by an Hebrew word, which moſt frequently denotes *Bounty*: And as He himſelf is infinite; ſo his Bounty is (I had almoſt ſaid) ſomewhat more, extending, beſides himſelf, to every one of his Creatures. For what was the Creation, but a wonderful Emanation of the Divine Goodneſs? What is his Providence, but his daily Beneficence in maintaining and providing for all the Creatures he hath made? And not to mention his Care of inferiour Beings, how innumerable are the Benefits that Man derives daily from his Goodneſs? Man, whom he hath advanced above the reſt of his viſible Creatures, as in the dignity of his Nature, ſo alſo in the multitude of his Favours. For doth not

Exod. 34.6. חסד

Time

Time continually travel in the production of new Bleſſings on us, every Seaſon entertaining us with its peculiar Conveniences? Is not every Creature given us to ſerve our Neceſſities for Food and Raiment, nay and to miniſter to our moderate and ſober Pleaſures too? But not to ſtay on ſmaller Largeſſes, hath not the ſame Bounty given us his eternal Son to be born, to obey, to ſuffer and to die, in purchaſing Heaven for us? Hath he not ſent his holy Spirit to aſſiſt us, and given us his holy Goſpel, and, by a late Miracle of Mercy to this Nation, confirmed us in the poſſeſſion of it, to direct us in the way thither? Is he not ready to give us all things we need, all things that are fit for us, and that for asking? Yea, and doth he not frequently by his Bounty prevent our Petitions, as well as exceed our deſervings? God's Bounty is a Fountain always running over, and yet never exhauſted.

And need I now to ſay, Who is a follower of this Goodneſs? Not ſure the *Envious* Man, who is ſo far from giving to others, that he grudges them the Gifts of Heaven. Not the *Covetous* Man, who is ſo far from being bountious to others, that he is not ſo to himſelf, but for fear of dying a Beggar, lives like one. Not thoſe *ſelfiſh narrow Souls*, that can influence no

wider than the Bodies they inform; confining their Love and Care to their own Carcases; and like the fat Monk, who, at the dissolution of the Abbies, had got a Pension for his own Life, not at all concern'd for the Necessities of others, so they can save their own Stakes. But least of all, those *morose Malicious* Men, who love Mischief, delight in harrasing and ruining their Neighbours; and like the Hedg-hog (as one compares him) wrapping themselves in their own soft Down, turn their sharp Prickles to all the World besides. No, he only transcribes the
1 Tim. 6. 18. Divine Bounty who is *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*; Who, like the Sun, liberally scatters about him that Light wherewith he abounds, and with-holds his warm Influences from none of his Inferiors, that wants them. Who (as * *Justin Martyr* pursues the Character) takes part of his Neighbours Burden, gladly communicates to them any good thing, wherein they are deficient, and by bestowing on them that want, the abundance God hath given him, becomes *a God to them that receive it.* He (as † *Antonius* in *Jul. Cæsar*'s answers *Silenus*) who needs the least himself, and gives the most to others, best resembles the Infinite Good, who needs nothing, and gives all things.

* *Epist. ad Diogn. Edit.* 1593. p. 387. ὠφελεῖται γὰρ λαμβάνοντων.

† Τίποτε ἐνόμιζεν εἶναι τὴν τὸ εὖ μιμεῖσθαι; Δεῖσθαι μὲν ἐλαχίστων, εὖ ποιεῖν δὲ ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα πλείστους.

Let

Let this then be conſidered by you, whom God hath enriched with plentiful Eſtates, and ſo qualified, that you may be great Bleſſings to your Country and to your Inferiours. Look up to Heaven and remember, that you are not *Great* as God is, unleſs you be *Good* too; unleſs you lay out your ſelves in Works of Beneficence for the Service of the Public, and the relief of the diſtreſſed; unleſs as you have more than others, ye do more Good with it; nay, unleſs ye can not only give to them that need your Bounty, but forgive them alſo that need your Mercy. Which leads us to the next branch of the Divine Goodneſs, which we are to imitate.

3. *His long-ſuffering and Mercy toward them that provoke him.* That God is patient and merciful, not eaſily provoked, nor inexorable when he is provoked, is as evident as that we ſurvive the Sins we have committed, and live ſtill in hopes of pardon after all our Provocations. Our own Experience aſſures us, that he is not wont to ſend down Fire from Heaven upon the kindling of every Luſt below. That he doth not command the Earth to ſwallow up every bold Offender, as ſoon as he hath made himſelf unworthy to tread on it: That

he

he is not always moved at the first Affront, but is still as slow to Wrath, as we are forward to provoke, and no less backward to punish, than we are to reform. For do not all of us breath by the benefit of his Forbearance? Had not the very best of us been dead, in the Grave, in Hell long since, had not he *made known his* Rom. 9. 22. *Power, by enduring with much long-suffering* us *Vessels of Wrath, so fitted for Destruction.*

But to forbear with Sinners is not all the Goodness that God shews towards them; for he is always ready to forgive them, and his Mercy is no less conspicuous than his Patience. How importunately doth he invite all Prodigals to return? and how ready is he to entertain and embrace them when they do? How loth is he that any of us should die in our Sins? and how forward to give us Life, if we forsake them? And in the mean time, even whilst we persist in our Rebellion, how constant is he in his Care of us, and Bounty to us.

And need I now to say, who are the followers of this Goodness? Not sure the froward and passionate, the cruel and revengeful Man, who never forbears with any that provoke him longer than till he have an opportunity of Revenge, and is never at rest till that be found

out.

out: Not thoſe tumultuous Spirits that never can be quiet, till they have ſignalized their Reſentments by the ruin of their Adverſaries, and through the unrulineſs of their Paſſions, are miſerable themſelves, till they have made their Enemies ſo. No; ſuch impetuous Souls derive their Heat from Hell, not from the calm Influences of Heaven, and imitate the *great Wrath* of that wicked one, whoſe Malice deſigns the deſtruction of Mankind; not the Goodneſs of God, who always *waits to be gracious*, even toward the moſt provoking Offenders. If you will tranſcribe this Copy, you muſt be *ſlow to Wrath*, and *merciful as your Heavenly Father is*; and that is not only to the good, but alſo *to the unthankful and evil*: You muſt be ſo juſt toward others, as not to need Pardon from them; and ſo merciful, as never to deny Pardon to any that need it from you. You muſt reſolve to practiſe no other ſort of Revenge on your Enemies, than by your kindneſs *to heap Coals of Fire on their Heads*; and according to the method of Divine *Goodneſs* in *leading Sinners to Repentance*, take this only courſe to make them repent the Injuries they have done you, by *overcoming Evil with Good.*

Rev. 12. 12. Iſa. 30. 18. Jam. 1. 11. Luk. 6. 36. Rom. 12. 20, 21. Rom. 2. 4.

And now you have a fair opportunity to ſhew

shew this Christian, this Divine Temper. Whatever Injuries may have formerly been done to any of you, now that you have it in your Power to be revenged, let the World see you have forgiven them: That the Christian hath so much the advantage of the Man, and of the Gentleman too, (according to the common standard of Gentility) that you can exult as much in such an occasion of expressing your Meekness, as any others may have done formerly in signalizing their more passionate Resentments: That you prefer the glorious Triumphs of Christian Patience, and the Peace of your Country and the whole Nation, that may be secured thereby, above the little Satisfaction of some angry Retaliations: And had rather make others ashamed of their Heats, by setting before them the instance of your calm and sedate Temper, than seem to justify what they have done, by doing any thing like an imitation of it.

It only remains that I recommend the Divine Goodness to your Imitation,

4. *In respect of his Purity.* That God is a Being infinitely pure and holy, and that all Immorality is as contrary to his Nature as his Laws, can be doubted by none that believe him

to

to be a moſt perfect Being. Some few are ſo debauched in their Principles, as not to acknowledg Vertue a Perfection, and Vice an Imperfection. God's Moral Laws then, whereby he obliges us to Purity, are not the bare reſult of his Will, but of his Nature; and all Immorality and Debauchery is odious to him, not barely becauſe he cannot abide to be diſobeyed, but becauſe it is contrary to that eternal Reaſon, which is founded on the Purity of his Nature. Heathen Poets indeed repreſented the Transformations of their Deities, and the abominable Extravagancies then committed by them. Yet ſo far were their wiſeſt Men from imagining any ſuch things conſiſtent with the Divine Nature, that *Plutarch* tells us, they accounted it an unholy thing to report them, or *even to hear them.*

De Ει *apud* Delphos, *p.* 393. *E.*

If then you will follow God's Goodneſs, you muſt, according to the Apoſtle's Exhortation, *purify your ſelves, as God is pure.*

1 Joh. 3. 3.

And I hope it will not be judged impertinent for me (now that I am called to ſpeak to this Honourable Auditory) to become the Advocate of *contemned Morality*, and to recommend Purity and Sobriety to you Great Ones; whoſe Example would as effectually teach it your Inferiours,

ferious, as it is too evident it hath already done the contrary. Who ſees not that the Prophaneſs and Debauchery, that every Clown is now ſo expert in, had its Original from the *Honourable* and *Worſhipful*? Retainers have imitated their Patrons, Servants their Maſters, and Tenants their Landlords, tranſcribing into their own Practice the Prophaneſs, Drunkenneſs and Whoredoms, which they obſerved to be not practiſed only, but even applauded among them. And ſo far hath this prevailed, that it hath been accounted (I need not to ſay) *almoſt* a Scandal for a Gentleman to be ſober; So that he that durſt not Swear, or Drink, or Whore; that had not ſome, or all of theſe Gentile Qualities, was accounted a mean ill-bred Fellow, and of no other uſe than to be rediculed by the reſt of the Company. It hath been condemned as ill Manners to pretend to, and practiſe better Morality than the reſt; and ſome, reſolved to be vertuous, have thought it their ſafeſt Courſe to avoid ſuch publick Appearances of the Gentrey, becauſe they judged it hard to be vertuous among them.

Thus it hath been: Is it now otherwiſe? There hath been a great and happy Revolution in the Times; Is there any ſuch Change in our Man-

Manners? The Gentry have to their Honour ſhewed an extraordinary Zeal for their Religion, hazarding their Eſtates and Lives for its Preſervation: And may it not now be reaſonably expected, that they ſhould practiſe, which is the only way of enjoying what they have purchaſed? There is nothing doubtleſs more baſe and below a Gentleman in the whole Catalogue of Vices, than *Hypocriſie* and *Diſſimulation*: And there cannot be a more baſe Hypocriſie, than for thoſe to pretend Zeal for any Religion, who have, who will have no Religion at all; than for them to contend with ſo much heat for our *Faith* and our *Laws*, who are reſolved their Lives ſhall be a continued Violation of and Affront to both. Shew then the ſincerity of your Profeſſion by your practice. Let the World ſee, that you love your holy Religion, by *living* it; and that you are truely Zealous for the beſt of Churches, by leading Lives, ſuch as may be for her Honour. Let *Swearing* be left out of your common Converſation, where, to ſay the leaſt, it is Impertinent, and altogether Inſignificant, unleſs it be of the Speaker's Prophaneſs: and reſerve it for Courts of Judicature, where, with *Truth*, *Judgment and* Jer. 4. 2.

Righteouſneſs, it may be uſeful. Let *Drunkenneſs* be baniſhed from your Society, and the vile faſhion of provoking it, by urging Healths, now at length Sacrified to the Honour of Sobriety. Let unchaſt Embraces be Strangers to your beds, and *Whoredom* and *Adultery*, as much hated by you, as it is ſure to be
Heb. 13. 4. ſeverely *judged by God*. That as the Gentry are wont to leave Faſhions, as ſoon as the Commonality take them up, you would now leave theſe and ſuch like Vices, which they have learnt from you, and by your eminent Sobriety help to retrieve them too.

How elſe ſhould you expect, that the pure and holy God ſhould continue his Protection, or appear any longer as your Deliverer? How elſe ſhould it be thought, that what you have done, hath been out of Zeal for Religion, and not rather Intereſt under that Diſguiſe; if, after your Point is gained, Religion be caſhiered, and when your Intereſts are ſerved, your Vices are retained? But I hope better Things of you, tho I thus ſpeak; that your Piety, Juſtice, Bounty, Mercy and Sobriety will give us a ſure Proſpect of good Times: That thereby you will make God your ſure Friend, and then the worſt of Men that are, or ſhall be againſt you,

ſhall

ſhall not be able to harm ſuch *Followers of that which is Good.* Which brings me at length to the ſecond Part of my Text.

II. The Privileg of ſuch as follow the Divine Goodneſs. *None will, none can harm ſuch an one.*

1. *This Interrogation ſuppoſes an Improbability at the leaſt that any ſhould deſire their Harm.* There is ſuch an attractive Beauty in this Image of the Divine Goodneſs, as will effectually recommend the Owners of it to the eſteem and love of all Mankind. For *a good Man* (the Apoſtle ſaith) *one would even dare to die.* A Man Rom. 5. 7. of this Character is ſo uſeful a part of this World, and obliges ſo many, that he muſt needs have the feweſt Enemies, and the moſt, and the beſt Friends. Friends that would run the greateſt Hazards, perhaps venture their own Lives for the preſervation of his: Who ſo ſavage and brutiſh as to be Enemies of thoſe that are public Bleſſings to Mankind? They are ſnarling Curs indeed, that bark at thoſe great Luminaries, which by their Soveraign Influences cheriſh all inferiour Beings. However, if ſuch have any Enemies, the warm Influences of their Kindneſſes are likely to melt them into a more

ſoft

ſoft and gentle Temper; or at leaſt the irreſiſtable energy of God's Providence will, who
Prov. 16. 7. hath promiſed, that *when a Mans ways pleaſe him* (as he cannot but be pleaſed with ſuch a lively Image of himſelf) *he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

But it's poſſible there may be ſome ſo monſtrouſly bad, and advanced ſo far toward the Nature of the Devil, as to hate them moſt that are moſt like to God, and for that reaſon moſt unlike themſelves; and to breath Deſtruction againſt all, whoſe Perfections upbraid and expoſe their Vices. However, theſe followers of God's Goodneſs may defy their impotent Malice. For,

2. *Let ſuch do their worſt they cannot harm them.* The Interrogative here, as frequently in the Scriptures, more vehemently denies. Τίς ὁ κακώσων ὑμᾶς; *who ſhall* (*i. e.* none ſhall) *be able to harm you?* Which will appear from the Conſideration of theſe three Particulars.

1. That no *external Evils that the Malice of Men can bring on them, can ruffle the inward Peace and Serenity of their Conſciences.* Naturaliſts take notice of the Sagacity of the Hedghog, whom Nature hath taught to retreat within herſelf, and take Sanctuary under her own Prickles againſt the

the Violence of ſtronger Beaſts. In Alluſion to which the Royal Stoick *Antoninus* counſels his virtuous Man, for Security againſt external Evils, * to contract himſelf within himſelf, to retreat into his own Breaſt, and take Sanctuary againſt external Violences under the Protection of his own Innocence. A *merry Heart*, ſaith *Solomon*, or rather † a good *Heart, is a continual Feaſt.* A Feaſt that cannot, like *Caligula's*, be diſturbed by a flaſh of Lightning, or clap of Thunder; a Feaſt, whoſe Viands cannot be ſnatched from thy Mouth, nor thou defeated of the Entertainment by the moſt potent Malice. Let Oppreſſion rob thee of thy Eſtate; Let Calumny blacken thy Reputation: Let hard and cruel uſage impair thy Health; yet none of them can rob thee of thy Innocence, or that inward Peace that reſults from the Conſcience of it. When Storms roar abroad, there will be a Calm within, and the ſoft Whiſpers of a good Conſcience, thoſe *Eccoes* of Heaven's approbation, will charm thee not only into Peace, but but Exultation and Rejoycing, even when the World breaths out nothing but Threatning and Deſtruction. The followers of God's Goodneſs are hereby aſſured, that *God is with them*, and that makes them not to fear what Men are, or what they act againſt them. And the leſs,

* Εἰς ἑαυτὸν συνειλεῖσθαι, lib. 7. εἰς ἑαυτὸν, §. 28.

† טוב לב Prov. 15. 15.

2. *Because what is done against them, God will help them to become better for it.* *Seneca* compares his wise, virtuous Man, to *Phidias*, that famous Statuary, who could shew his Skill not only in Ivory, Brass or Marble, but (when those were wanting) in baser Materials, by carving on any Matter the best Work it was capable of. For as a good Man can exercise his Vertues in the midst of abundance, so (when stripp'd of that) in Poverty. He can be vertuous at home, and (if driven thence) in Banishment: Like the Fire, which turns all sorts of Fewel into its own Nature, and encreases its Heat and Brightness by those Heaps, that seem to threaten the smoothering of both. Or like the Rod of *Mercury* (as *Epictetus* compares him) he turns every thing he touches into Gold. Whatever his Condition is, he makes it best for him by doing his Duty, and exercising sutable Vertues in it. And this not barely by his own Strength, but by the gracious Assistances of God, who hath promised to *make all things to work together for his good.* And who can harm him, who is sure to be better for all the Harm his Enemies do him? whose inward Peace cannot be discomposed, whose Vertues will be improved by all the Attempts of their Malice against him? Especially considering,

De Provid. c. 4.

L. 3. *c.* 10.

Rom. 8. 28.

3. Last-

3. Laſtly, *That his eternal Felicity will be increaſed by all his temporal Sufferings.* He may defy his Enemies Malice, as *Socrates* did *Anytus* and *Melitus*; *Ye may kill me, but yet cannot hurt me.* Their Malice may thruſt him out of this World; but as it cannot keep him out of Heaven, ſo it will occaſion the increaſe of his Glories there. For as there are degrees of Happineſs in Heaven, (*one Star* there *differs from another in Glory*) ſo they that ſuffer for well-doing, ſhall ſhare in the higheſt of them. *Their light Afflictions will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. Far exceeding* not only the Merit of their Sufferings, but alſo the Glories of all thoſe that have ſuffered leſs than they. *Lazarus*, who lived a good Man in the moſt mean and neceſſitous State here, we find in the moſt honourable place, next the Maſter of the Feaſt, *in Abraham's Boſom* at the Supper of the Lamb. He that doth and ſuffers moſt for God, is ſure to receive moſt from him; ſo that the Malice of his Enemies deſigning his Miſery will inhaunce his Happineſs, and add to his future Recompence whatever they take away from his preſent Enjoyments. *Anaxagoras* (as *Plutarch* relates) being unjuſtly deprived of his Eſtate, and thereby conſtrained to travel into Foreign Parts,

Epict. Ench. c. 79. & *Simpl. in loc.* p. 296.

1 Co. 15. 41.

2 Cor. 4. 17.

Luk. 16. 23. *Vid. Ham. on* Mat. 8. 11.

met with such Advantages for the improvement of his Intellectuals, that upon his return home, passing by the Lands which had formerly been his, he said, *I had never been happy, if I had not lost you.* Such pleasant Reflections will good Men in their Mansions of Glory make on their Worldly Losses and Sufferings. I had never arrived at this height of Happiness, had I wanted Enemies to endeavour my Misery. I had never attained to such an exceeding weight of Glory, had I been pressed by a less weight of Afflictions. I had never enjoyed so much of the Love and Goodness of God, had I tasted the less of the Malice and Cruelty of Men. Thanks therefore to those Enemies that designing my Harm, advanced my Felicity, and by their malicious Charity, helped me to obtain a brighter Crown, in enduring the Sufferings which they inflicted: Or rather *Hallalujah's* to my good God, who hath turned their Malice to my advantage; and by those that pursued me with a purpose to destroy me, hath driven me further into Heaven for Sanctuary.

This is the Priviledg of those that imitate the Goodness of God, either none shall be willing, or none shall be able to harm them, because they cannot rob them of their inward

Peace,

Peace, and their external Injuries will make them better here, and more happy hereafter.

I ſhall only add, that as they are ſafe from Mens Malice, ſo they are alſo from God's Wrath.

A time will come, however the World ſeems to forget it, when all the Pageantry of this Life *will be gone by*, and the more dreadful Solemnities of the laſt Judgment ſucceed them; when the Realities of the preſent Scene will be tranſacted, and the great Aſſizes of the World approach, whereof we have before us a fainter Emblem. A time will come, when the ſhrill Eccho's of the laſt Trump ſhall pierce not the Air only, but the Earth too, and awaken all Mankind out of their deep Sleep of Death to their final Trial; when the Shouts of Angels rending the Skies, ſhall uſher, and Flames of a burning World ſhall light the Judg of it to his Tribunal. A time will come, when before that tremendous Judg, and the Auguſt Aſſembly of Angels and Men, every one ſhall be impleaded, have all his ſecret Crimes diſplaid, and from that Righteous Judg receive a Sentence according to his Works. 1 Cor. 7. 23.

And whoſe followers then will you deſire to be found? Who then will fare better, than they

that have the Image of God's Goodneſs imprinted on them? Who then can expect a favourable Judg and a merciful Sentence, but they that, having done Good in their public or private Capacities, have neither the Cries of the Injured, nor the Clamors of their own Conſcience to appale them? It's not Greatneſs then, but only Goodneſs that will avail you. It's not numerous Titles, high Honours, great Authority, no nor great Eſtates that can then ſtand you in ſtead, unleſs you have thereby promoted Juſtice, protected Innocence, and ſet a good Example of Sobriety and Charity. Then every one muſt ſtand naked, whatever their external Ornaments here have been, except thoſe
Iſa. 61. 10. only that *are clothed in Robes of Righteouſneſs.* Then none will be found to have an Intereſt in Chriſt's Merits, but they only that have tranſcribed God's Goodneſs. And they then being ſafe from Harm, ſecure of Bleſſedneſs, ſhall be advanced to that glorious Immortali-
Pſal. 17. 15. ty, where they ſhall *be for ever ſatisfied with God's Likeneſs.* To which God of his infinite Mercies, bring us all, through the Merits of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

FINIS.